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_____ Monday January 31, 1977 _____ CG NIDC 77-024C _____

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Monday January 31, 1977.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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LEBANON: Tensions Abating

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[REDACTED] //Tensions over southern Lebanon appear to have abated, although some skirmishing continued yesterday between Lebanese Christian and Palestinian forces near the Lebanese-Israeli border.//

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] //The Israeli government issued a communique after its cabinet meeting yesterday indicating that the government was maintaining "vigorous" diplomatic contacts attended by the appropriate security measures to secure the return of the Syrian units to their former positions. [REDACTED]

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SOUTH AFRICA: Church Challenges Government

25X1 [] In open defiance of South Africa's racial discrimination laws, the Catholic Church has opened its white schools to non-whites. Thus far, less than 100 black and colored students have been enrolled in a few schools throughout the country. Church officials, who have said the schools will be integrated at an extremely slow pace, are waiting for the government's reaction to their challenge to one of the main tenets of apartheid.

25X1 [] The Catholics have the largest black membership of any church in the country, and the congregation is steadily growing. In 1970 there were nearly one and a half million black Catholics--more than 80 percent of the church's total membership in South Africa. The Vatican, aware of the increasing importance of black Catholics on a continent where Christianity is generally declining, has given clear support to school integration.

25X1 [] The Anglican Church has openly espoused the principle of integrated schools, but has taken a more cautious approach by seeking permission from Cape Province officials to integrate. The Methodists are also interested in desegregating their schools.

25X1 [] Transvaal provincial officials have threatened to close the integrated Catholic schools there but have not yet done so. The provincial government in the Cape, in an apparent attempt to avoid an immediate confrontation between church and state, has referred the Anglican request to the cabinet. The minister of education has issued a warning of serious implications but has expressed a willingness to discuss the problems if parental attitudes are also taken into account.

25X1 [] The government has several options but whatever it does, it is highly unlikely to ignore the problem in light of the extensive publicity the school integration has received:

--It could turn a blind eye to school integration, as it has previously to racially mixed convents, parish houses, and Catholic schools that enrolled a few colored students on a trial basis last year. Because of the extensive publicity the current school integration has received, this course seems highly unlikely.

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--It could allow a small number of non-white students to enroll in church schools. These individual exemptions could be rationalized under the doctrine of Christian National Education that allows Afrikaans and English-speaking communities to provide their children with an education preserving their own heritages. This option would permit the government to control the number of students enrolled in church schools.

--It could withdraw the registration of the integrated schools, thus legally closing them. The schools could not continue to operate independently, because white parents could be prosecuted for not providing their children the ten years of compulsory education.

--It could prosecute the parents of the non-white students for breaking segregation laws, thus effectively halting integration.

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Whatever the outcome, the Catholic Church sees the time as ripe to take the first step toward the changes it feels must eventually come to South Africa. The government's decision will determine what move, if any, the English-speaking churches make next.

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INDIA: Elections Announced

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Indian Prime Minister Gandhi's decision to hold a parliamentary election in mid-March was made in the hope of taking advantage of her present strengths and the opposition's present weaknesses. The country's economy today is relatively buoyant, and there appears to be little organized opposition to the 19-month-old state of emergency.

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The opposition has little cohesion. The non-communist parties probably will have too little time to join forces to counter Gandhi's ruling Congress Party. The four largest non-communist opposition parties with a national following are attempting to create a united front, but conflicting ideologies and personalities will limit their effectiveness.

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[] Selection of candidates to oppose Congress Party nominees will be a real test of opposition unity. The opposition parties lack the financial support that the Congress Party is able to obtain from the business community.

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[] The pro-Soviet Communist Party of India, an ally of the Congress Party in several states in the last national election in 1971, is in an awkward position. The party's recent criticism of Gandhi's son Sanjay for his generally pragmatic and often conservative economic and social proposals has angered the Prime Minister. Without elective arrangements with the Congress Party, the Communists stand to win considerably fewer seats in a new parliament than the 24 that they held in the last one.

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[] Gandhi probably sees the election as a chance to stifle international criticism of her original decision to impose the state of emergency and jail her opponents. The state of emergency has not been rescinded for the election, although some emergency regulation--such as press censorship and restrictions on political activity--have been relaxed.

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[] The government retains the option of tightening restrictions at any time before or after the balloting. Gandhi said as much when she announced the election on January 18. She asserted that the country had been brought back to health, but she warned her opponents that the government could tolerate no relapse. []

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